

The Bible

Module 2.4

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12

Consider for a moment the gravity of those first five words from Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God...” The One True God, eternally existing as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, has spoken! The Creator and sustainer of all things, the one by whom all things were spoken into being, has restrained Himself to the construction of language so that those whom He has made may know Him.

No human language is fully capable of capturing the fullness of who God is. Our verbs fall short of indicating the totality of His actions. Our nouns are incapable of fully identifying who He is. Our adjectives languish in describing the totality of His glory. However, despite the limitations of language, God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through His Word so that we may know Him.

The word *for* at the beginning of Hebrews 4:12 indicates to us that an explanation is coming, that what was just written by the author is now going to be more fully explained. In verse 11 of chapter 4 we read, “let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.” While an extended exposition of Hebrews 4 is outside the scope of this paper, a few brief observations must be made.

- 1) There is a Sabbath rest available for the people of God.
- 2) We are commanded to strive for this rest.
- 3) Disobedience is the opposite of striving and brings with it the absence of rest.

The *rest* that the author of Hebrews is writing about is Sabbath rest. It began as a literal, and weekly, command that the Israelites were to obey and specifically foreshadowed that an even greater rest was coming.

During the Creation week, God modeled for all of us a rhythm and pattern of rest and then specifically commanded Israel to follow just as He had done. As we consider what the author of Hebrews writes about the promise of rest that still stands (Heb. 4:1), we must note that it is disobedience which leads one to fail in reaching it. The question then that immediately follows is, “disobedience to what?”

The answer we are given is...disobedience to God’s Word. Hebrews 4:2 tells us “for good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” Verse 11 then gives us the command to strive for rest, which in context is the result of listening and faith.

Consequently, verse 12 reveals to us that God's Word leads us to the very rest that God has planned for us *later on* (v. 8). To this end, God's Word is living, active, and effective at dividing the most indivisible parts of us. In short, God's Word is capable of revealing to us that we have indeed fallen short of His glory and desperately need His grace and the atonement for our sins that Jesus Christ has made on our behalf.

However, it is not merely words on a page that provide this knowledge of sin and offer of salvation. Rather, it is the person to whom these words, God's Word, lead us. Shifting his pronouns in verse 13, the author of Hebrews abruptly moves from the written Word of God to the person of God, the man Jesus Christ. The author writes, "and no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account."

The Charis Fellowship is deeply committed to God's Word. We believe it reveals truth, exposes sin, and leads us to salvation in Jesus Christ. We believe this because the written Word leads us to the living Word, the God-man Jesus Christ. To this end, we begin our Commitment to Common Identity boldly declaring "that Jesus, the incarnate Word of God as revealed in the Bible, the written Word of God, is the only Savior and Lord." Salvation is only found in His name for "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

As we declare these truths to be the truths of God's Word, it is important for us to know exactly what we mean when we say "the Word of God." By this term we mean a completed and bounded set of writings that have been specially revealed by the One True God and given to us. Specifically, we believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, and only these, are the written Word of God. There is nothing that needs to be added to them, and there is nothing that should be taken away from them. In their totality they contain all that God has chosen to specially reveal, and it is these Words that lead us to Him.

The process of God revealing His Word to humanity happened through a variety of different means as God superintended what He wanted to say through the human authors that wrote and spoke on His behalf. There were times when God Himself wrote on stone tablets, and there were times when God commanded something to be written or spoken. The Old Testament prophets often said, "thus says the LORD" and were commanded to speak just as God had spoken to them. The New Testament contains many different letters that were written to different churches and different narrative accounts written of Jesus's life. We understand God's superintendence of His Word to mean that God directed the thoughts of these writers so that as they wrote they were writing the very words God wanted them to write without Him dictating to them or physiologically controlling their quills.

In Module 2.3, regarding the Holy Spirit, we understand the Scriptures to be the product of inspiration so that every word that has been revealed by God is exactly what He intended to be revealed. As a result, these sixty-six books are fully authoritative, true, and without error in their original manuscripts. What is more, to the degree that our English translations, or any other

translation in any other language, agree with these original manuscripts we can claim a wholly inspired, inherent, and authoritative Text.

While a defense and full explanation of the evidence for manuscript reliability is outside the scope of this paper, it is important and intellectually honest for us to recognize that we do not possess any original manuscripts. However, this does not mean we are left without evidence and compelling reasons to conclude with confidence that we have an accurate, reliable, and preserved copy of the Scriptures.¹

The preservation of the Scriptures is also a work of the Holy Spirit which provides us with confidence that we can believe what has been handed down to us. Regarding the eternity of God's Word, the Psalmist writes "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens" (Ps. 119:89). The Apostle Peter writes about the "living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23) and quotes the Prophet Isaiah saying, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever" (Isa. 40:6,8; 1 Pet. 1:24-25). Furthermore, given the numerous quotations of the Old Testament found within the New Testament, by Jesus and the other New Testament writers, we can be absolutely certain that they believed the Scriptures that they had were indeed the preserved and authoritative Word of God.

After His resurrection, Jesus instructed two of His followers regarding the prophetic truthfulness of the Old Testament in pointing forward to Himself. Luke records for us that "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). So sure was this prophetic and preserved witness, that earlier in His ministry Jesus told the religious leaders that they had entirely missed the point of the Scriptures because they refused to come to Him for life (John 5:39-40). Their belief in Moses and his writings were actually unbelief because they did not acknowledge that Moses wrote of Christ (v. 46).²

Lastly, we believe the Word of God is illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples in the upper room that the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). To state this another way, without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit we are incapable of discerning the spiritual truths in the Scriptures on our own. That is why the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:14 about a veil that remains over the eyes of unbelievers that does not allow them to see the glory and beauty of Christ. Conversely, this veil has been removed for those who have turned to Christ the Lord, who is the Spirit (vv. 15-17). They now see with unveiled eyes and are being transformed from one degree of glory to another as they behold the glory of Jesus (v. 18).

¹ See <http://www.csntm.org/> for evidence and resources regarding the reliability of the Scriptures. Furthermore, Daniel Wallace has several lectures available on YouTube and other internet sites.

² It is important to note that in all probability these religious leaders did not have possession of the original writings Moses made, and they certainly did not have the stone tablets from Exodus 34. Therefore, the indictment of Jesus is all the more significant for us. Like them, we do not possess original copies but rather copies of copies. Like them, we as well will be held accountable for our belief and obedience to the Scriptures, both Old and New.

This work of the Holy Spirit is the only reason why men and women place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” Therefore, not only does the Holy Spirit illuminate the Word of God in the hearts and minds of believers, it is only through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit that an unbeliever (natural person) is even able to understand spiritual truth and becomes a spiritual person.

As we seek to obey the command of Jesus to make disciples, we must never forget that salvation (justification), sanctification, and one day glorification is entirely the work of our triune God. We can, and must, work hard at communicating the truth of God’s Word in fresh and relevant ways to our ever-changing world just as it has been done over the past 2,000 years. However, we must never sever God’s Word from our work, and we must never forget that it is only by His Spirit that men and women are born again.